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Communities Selected for Montana Main Street Affiliate Program

(HELENA) – The Montana Department of Commerce has selected four communities to participate in a new opportunity for downtown revitalization called Montana Main Street Affiliate Program. The communities of **Columbus, Sheridan, West Yellowstone and White Sulphur Springs** will be the initial participants in the pilot program specifically designed to assist small, rural communities exploring downtown revitalization.

“Downtown revitalization is an important part of preserving the history and character of Montana’s small communities,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “Main Street is the heart of rural communities. It’s a place for conversations and commerce, and the Main Street Affiliate Program will generate both.”

“This Main Street Affiliate Program is formatted after our highly successful Main Street Program and we’re very excited about assisting rural communities in downtown revitalization and significant economic development,” said Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite.

The intent of the Affiliate Program is to make downtown development training and education available to a larger number of Montana communities. Communities with a population of 2,000 or less are targeted for the program. An affiliate community, no matter its size, is still eligible to apply as a fully designated Montana Main Street community.

The Affiliate Programs will receive Main Street 101 Training, a registration scholarship to the Annual National Main Streets Conference, a Main Street Library, consultation with

and visits from the Montana Main Street staff, and an annual progress assessment on the anniversary of Affiliate selection.

The Affiliate Programs will, for their part, commit to improving their downtown commercial area, follow the Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization, actively participate in Montana Main Street activities, become a member of the National Main Street Network, and report key economic development statistics.

Columbus, Sheridan, West Yellowstone and White Sulphur Springs join the designated Main Street Programs in Butte, Stevensville, Libby, Anaconda, Polson, Red Lodge and Livingston.

In 2006, the designated programs saw a combined community investment valued at \$5.5 million. The communities utilized over 5,500 volunteer hours and experienced a net gain of 45 new businesses and 115 new jobs.

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